

The Churches and the Crisis

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The Church is admonished to-day as never before, by the awful European crisis, of its high and fundamental duty to advance the supremacy of spiritual forces in international life. This is a primary dictate of our religion. The vision and injunction of the Hebrew prophet was that nation should not lift up sword against nation, neither should they learn war any more. The heralding of Christ was as the bringer of a new era of peace and good-will among men, and his gospel was that of universal human brotherhood. The message of the first Christian apostle to Europe was that God hath made of one blood all nations of men. The time has come for religious men to take these mighty principles seriously and to make their influence so felt in the organization of the world that their operation shall not cease at national frontiers nor be subordinated to false and selfish patriotisms.

Our religion is a religion of peace and not of war; and the spectacle presented by Christendom to-day is an appalling irony. Above all nations is humanity; and if religion and the church fail to instill this truth in every nation, they fail in their paramount duty. That they have so failed in mournful measure is the solemn witness and reproof of the present European crisis; and the call comes to religious men and women everywhere to unite in a worthier conception and more definite fulfillment of our common obligations.

A civilization based upon materialism and heartless political machinery, instead of upon trust in God and in our brothers, cannot endure. War only breeds further war; and a dominating military establishment in any state makes

recourse to the existing instrumentalities of peace—and these are now broad and varied—in any real crisis difficult or impossible. We cannot serve at once the god of war and the Prince of Peace. The awful lesson of the present hour is that of the futility of force as the final appeal of nations and of reliance on great armaments as preservers of peace. These have proved, as the world's peace party has persistently foretold, and as the caller of the first Hague Peace Conference in his call pronounced them, the world's chief menace rather than defense; and it is for the world's real religion now to inspire and fortify the world's statesmanship in the supplanting of the system of militarism and war by the methods of justice and reason in the settlement of international disputes.

International morality must henceforth conform to individual morality. Murder and pillage do not cease to be such when committed on a great scale by great powers. Governments, like citizens, must be made to settle their differences not in battle but in court. The present international anarchy, with each state acting as a law unto itself, regardless of the common welfare and of common rights, must yield to international order; and every nation must be made to understand that when, in this modern interdependent world, one nation declares war against another nation, it declares war against the world. War is an anachronism in this twentieth Christian century, unworthy of the civilization which we have actually achieved; and the common sense of men, much more the first principles of religion, demand the immediate supplanting of the arbitrament of the sword by the arbitrament of reason.

The true defenses of nations are not dynamite and dreadnoughts, but justice and co-operation. Friendship and forbearance are not only nobler but stronger than defiance and vengeance; and it is true to-day as ever that they who take the sword shall perish by the sword. The influence of religion and the churches especially should be exerted in the promotion, through the most generous use of national resources, of

the broadest and most far-reaching policies which inspire confidence and love rather than the present exhausting policies which inspire fear and prove no real or reliable defense, as the voice of true religion has ever proclaimed. The world is learning at frightful cost what yoke is hardest and what burden heaviest, and in what consist the true shield and buckler of states; and when that lesson is more fully learned, peace budgets will grow large and war budgets small, and secretaries of peace will be multiplied and magnified in every Cabinet, where to-day the war function still holds such portentous place. There are safety and salvation for the nation and for the family of nations only when spiritual forces become sovereign and material things are made to serve instead of to master men.

Our religion has not been rightly brought to bear, in faithfulness to its clear imperative, in the creation of a fraternal society and the making of the nations of this world a united kingdom of God; and to that unfulfilled task "God's people" are summoned at this critical and searching juncture by every high divine and human call. For the recognition of this duty this fateful hour makes its solemn appeal to the churches in our nation, in every peaceful and neutral nation, and in every nation now at war. Many heavy and yet hopeful hearts are deeply moved by the conviction that some direct and earnest message to the religious forces among the warring peoples might light some lamp in the thick darkness and prove not without persuasive and compelling power.

In accordance with these principles, confronting the political reconstruction which must follow the war, and in which every nation, and especially our own nation, must perform its part, our churches and our people are called to very distinct and definite thought. They should consider earnestly their duty to make their influence speedily and powerfully felt in the demands:—that there shall be no more appropriation of territory by victors in war; that the true interest and desire of the inhabitants of every territory as to their political

relations shall be respected; that there shall be no sowing of the seeds of revenge and future war; that in Europe there shall be established some real concert, in the interest of real world concert; that the private manufacture of armaments and all vested interests in war shall be abolished; that no loans nor sale of war material shall be made by neutral peoples to belligerents; that the control of foreign policy shall be made more open and democratic in all nations, with an end to secret treaties and diplomacy; and that above all the monstrous armaments, which are so largely responsible for the present catastrophe, shall be drastically reduced.

Meantime, let not our own nation, safest of nations, and never so safe as now, be betrayed by any reaction, hysteria or false fear, or by the insidious militarist agitation to push false inferences from the war instead of its true and urgent lessons, into temptation to intensify here the very evil which has wrought such ruin in Europe. While the best thinkers and best statesmen there are aiming to make the war itself issue in the overthrow of the whole system of militarism and armed peace, let us above all men hold up their hands. Let us bravely lead the world toward the supplanting of rival national armies and navies by an international police; let us labor to extend the prevalence and scope of international arbitration, mediation and commissions of inquiry; and let us, fixing our minds upon the positive policies which promise a better order, co-operate with the peace workers of the whole world to secure for the next Hague Conference the broadest and most advanced program and to make that official congress of the nations a truer and more potent Parliament of Man, surely and steadily developing a peaceful and united world. This is not simply international politics; it is the concern of all who profess that God's will should be done on earth as it is in heaven.

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